

Informant: LMP-S2
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Interviewer: Claudia Hernandez and Michael Jones
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Format:

Interview Begins

S2: From the other side, but I still don't know if it's [Inaudible]. Now what happens is that-if you want I can also turn off the radio.

CH: Yes, because then only the radio will be heard. Yeah, he's gonna turn it off.

MJ: The music is going to interfere.

CH: Thank you. You're selling everything.

S2: Yes, look, right now we're a little scared that I feel very weak.

CH: Oh, he's feeling weak, very weak.

S2: And I don't know, you know, I am afraid that it's going to be something-

CH: Tough.

S2: Like pneumonia or something because last time it hit me like this, walking pneumonia [Inaudible].

CH: Yes.

S2: Until you fall. You begin feeling weak, and weak, and weak, but...

CH: He says he's been feeling himself weak like he's gonna have walking-

S2: Walking pneumonia.

CH: Walking pneumonia.

MJ: Yep. Yeah.

CH: And it happened to him before so he just kind of sold things because if he can't run it, you know...

MJ: Yeah.

CH: It's better to have the money, too. Right?

S2: Just in case anything happens.

CH: Just in case anything happens.

MJ: Well, then, we would like to take photographs-

S2: Sure.

MJ: Before you sell them. We have some pictures and we're going to ask you about the plants. [Inaudible].

S2: The large photos that you gave to me, ooh, the whole world [Inaudible].

CH: Yes. The pictures that you-that he took, I gave him, says that everybody has been so impressed by them.

MJ: Oh, well, good.

CH: Ok. So, I'm going to-

S2: Sit down.

CH: [Inaudible].

S2: [Inaudible].

CH: To show you [Inaudible]. Oh-

S2: It's the dirtiest thing that I cleaned here.

CH: Ok. Then, do you want to start?

MJ: Just, yeah, I'm already going so-

CH: Ok. Ok. We wanted to show this photo to see if you could recognize any of these plants that you used for the cleansing (limpia) on the day of, what is it called?

S2: San Simon (St. Simon).

CH: San Simon. I don't know if you can-

S2: [?] (chirimolla).

CH: [?] (chirimolla). Which one?

S2: This one.

CH: This large leaf. The large leaf is [?] (chirimolla).

MJ: Now, here this-oh, do you have a pen?

CH: Yes, I come prepared.

MJ: Yeah. Alright.

CH: Ok. Then, this is [?] (chirimolla). And what is it used for?

S2: The [?] (chirimolla), well, is a fruit that is eaten, very delicious. A tropical fruit.

CH: Ok.

S2: Well, they also use it for cleansings (limpias) and healings (curaciones).

CH: Ok. It's not something that is made as a tea?

S2: No.

CH: Ok.

S2: No.

CH: No. So, only the fruit is eaten and-

S2: The fruit.

CH: The leaves are used for spiritual things. Ok. Do you remember-

S2: The golden seal (boton de oro).

CH: Golden seal (boton de oro). Golden seal (boton de oro). And what is that used for?

S2: For spiritual matters, more than anything.

CH: More than anything. It has flowers?

S2: Flowers, yes, it flowers.

CH: Oh. Ok. And this one with the little leaves-?

S2: Myrtle (mirto).

CH: Myrtle (mirto). And that is made into a tea or only as-?

S2: No, for spiritual matters.

CH: Spiritual matters. Ok. What else can I see there...I don't know.

S2: It's only three herbs that I-

CH: That you cut.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Oh, ok. They were [?] (grangajos). They left them [Inaudible] in a tea. Mh-h. Ok. Here we have other plants.

S2: There's [?] (pirul). That's [?] (pirul).

CH: Which is the [?] (pirul)?

S2: It's the only one that's-and rue (ruda).

CH: Oh. This one's rue (ruda)-?

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Or the [?] (pirul)?

S2: This one's-

CH: Ok. This one's rue (ruda).

S2: Aha.

CH: The little one.

S2: And this one's the [?] (pirul) and there's sage.

CH: Sage.

S2: [Inaudible] sage.

CH: Sage, [?] (pirul).

Phone rings

MJ: Can you turn the camera off?

CH: Mh-h.

Tape pauses

Tape resumes

CH: And what did this use to be?

S2: That's [?] (copal).

CH: [?] (copal). And what exactly is [?] (copal)?

S2: It's tree gum.

CH: Oh, it's tree gum?

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Ok. And it's only used as a type of incense, right?

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Ok. And there was also garlic (ajo) inside of here, right? This is garlic (ajo).

S2: Yes, garlic.

CH: Garlic. Ok. And why do you put all of those things together? Is it-what type of a-

S2: I was cleaning (limpiando).

CH: It's for a cleansing (limpia)?

S2: Cleaning, cleansing the atmosphere, preparing the ceremony.

CH: Ok. Is there any other plant that you can remember?

S2: No.

CH: Just the-

S2: Only the ones that are right there.

CH: The sage and the-

S2: [?] (pirul), and the...mh-h.

CH: Ok. And the garlic (ajo).

S2: And the garlic (ajo). Aha.

CH: And all of it is for cleansing (limpia).

S2: Mh-h.

CH: And is it a type of cleansing (limpia) that is only done for San Simon? Or is it a type of cleansing that you prepare-?

S2: It can be done for any occasion or for any-

CH: Any saint.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Ok.

S2: Let's say, any ceremony.

CH: Ok. I want to see what we're doing here...Here we lit the little candles.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: And what did each candle stand for?

S2: The candles were for cleansing one's self (limpiarse), and for placing an offering, and for defeating enemies. Or a moment for defeating and making petitions.

CH: Mh. Ok. And we also have sage, again.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: For the cleansings (limpias). And the cigars. We were all smoking cigars. When we came, you gave us a cigar.

S2: It was the cigar. It's the offering-it's what he likes. Tobacco (tabaco), rum (ron), or liquor (licor).

CH: Ok.

S2: It was also a way to let your petitions be known.

CH: Ok. Here you are throwing some kind of [Inaudible]. I don't even know what type it is. By any chance do you remember?

S2: It was brandy. It seems to me, but...

CH: Brandy.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Ok. I was going to ask you concerning cleansings (limpias). I have noticed that sometimes cleansings (limpias) with incense, and there are other times when a cleansing is done with egg (huevo), plants. What's the difference? Is there one method that is more effective than the other?

S2: No. It depends on the person. Or it depends on the customs. It depends on his beliefs. It depends. Sometimes it also depends on what the spirit orders, but I think that they are all the same.

CH: This day of the celebration of San Simon's birthday we had various cleansings done.

S2: Various cleansings, yes.

CH: What is the reason for having several cleansings done?

S2: Because his birthday was being celebrated. So, it was the best moment for one to be ridding himself and being the cleanest is best.

CH: Mh. Ok. Ok. Here we have Pat whose being cleansed. Here we have more.

MJ: Are those different plants from the other one?

CH: No, these are just clean copies of the same pictures.

MJ: Oh, because he had another bunch of plants.

CH: Yeah.

MJ: And I had made a copy.

CH: It was-

MJ: Where he put them on the fire, I think.

CH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Those were the sage, the rue (ruda), and [?] (pirul). I don't know how to say [?] (pirul) in Spanish.

MJ: It's the same as in-

S2: Red pepper, red pepper.

CH: Red pepper? [?] (pirul) is-

S2: California red pepper.

MJ: Those plants are the same as the ones that you just marked?

CH: Yes. No. Let me show you.

MJ: I don't think so.

CH: No, no. Yeah. I don't think so, either. Here. Oh, here, here. We have these two.

MJ: Uh-huh.

CH: And so these are sage, rue (ruda) and [?] (pirul). And then here we have copal, incense, and garlic.

MJ: Oh.

CH: So, that was one bunch.

MJ: Ok, and the other one?

CH: And the other bunch was these, which is golden seal (boton de oro).

MJ: Mh-h.

CH: Myrrh¹, and [?] (chirimolla). And that was all.

MJ: Ok.

CH: Ok.

MJ: We will do.

CH: Ok.

MJ: What about San Simon? Well, actually, well, you know, both San Simon and the gypsy woman-have you asked about the gypsy spirit guide?

CH: A little bit. Could we ask you some questions regarding the spirit that guides you?

¹ Source says 'mirto,' which is myrtle. Interviewer might be thinking 'mirra,' which is myrrh.

S2: Uh-huh. Let's see. Tell me.

CH: You had told me that the gypsy woman (la gitana) is the one that guides you.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Does she have any particular name or is just the gypsy woman (la gitana)?

S2: Look, there's a name, but that is reserved.

CH: Ok. Yes. It's something personal.

S2: Yes. It's something like that. Something that we can't-

CH: And is it reserved because it's something she doesn't want to be told to other people or-

S2: Yes.

CH: Or something that is only named if it is going to be used?

S2: If it's going to be used, and only for-

CH: For yourself?

S2: For myself.

CH: Ok. Does she help you make healings (curaciones)?

S2: Yes.

CH: Is she always with you or do you have to summon her?

S2: She is summoned, but they are with you at all time. They are always there. It's like people that believe in angels.

CH: Hm.

S2: So, your guardian angel or your angel is always by your side. It's the same thing.

CH: Ok. And does she have a special prayer?

S2: No. No. No. It's just something that...

CH: Ok. Does she help you more in some areas than in others?

S2: Yes.

CH: Could I ask you what type of things?

S2: It depends.

CH: Ok.

S2: It depends because there are some things that they don't permit. I could ask for something and perhaps it won't happen.

CH: Oh, ok. Ok. So she chooses what she'll help you in and-

S2: Yes. And what she won't.

CH: And what she won't.

S2: Yes, because if it is something that will cause me harm or something like says, "You see it with this. I see it with this."

CH: Ah. Ok. Ok. What type situations has she helped you in?

S2: In many. In many. In plenty.

CH: Could you give me an example?

S2: I can't precisely tell you much, but in many things.

CH: Ok. And San Simon. What could you tell me concerning how he helps you?

S2: Look, San Simon, there are many things that people say. That he doesn't do miracles for them. That he doesn't do, but sometimes they are things that will harm us or they won't allow us to grow to do what is right. And that is when things don't work out for us. But I have many things to be grateful for because, I was especially asking for the store to be sold.

CH: Oh, he asked you to sell it?

S2: I asked him.

CH: Oh, you. You asked him. Ah. Ok. So, he helped you. That's great.

S2: I asked them to help me. If I have bad health, perhaps it was the best time for me to take my space and time. I don't think I'll retire from doing spiritual work, but maybe it will be more different.

CH: To have a little bit of rest. Mh-h.

S2: Now it will be a little difficult for me.

CH: Do you believe that spiritual work is something that is rigorous for your body? Or your self?

S2: Yes. It's something that has to be-I don't know how to tell you-it's something that is like a drug.

CH: Wow.

S2: It's something that your body needs. Your spirit needs it. And sometimes these are things that have to happen. They are not things that are supposed to happen to us, but are for your improvement.

CH: Mh. Ok. Do you have any example-another example because you already gave me one of the way that San Simon helps. What kind of problems does he help with the most?

S2: In anything that you could ever ask him. Be it, legal problems, health problems, romance problems. Many people use him for love. Others use him for to do evil. Others use him for others things, for other type of things. The [Inaudible] have just got out a book concerning him and all of the miracles.

CH: Oh, really?

S2: Yeah.

CH: Hey.

S2: Of all the miracles.

CH: Do you have the book?

S2: Yes.

CH: You can show it to me, then, to see if I should buy it.

S2: Yes.

CH: Because I have read other books regarding San Simon, but they are based more on Guatemala.

S2: Yes, they are from Guatemala.

CH: Oh, they are from Guatemala?

S2: They are from Guatemala.

CH: Perhaps I thought that they were from Los Angeles.

S2: No, this is from Guatemala.

CH: Ah. Ok. They've told me that he helps children a lot. That he helps a lot with problems regarding work and things regarding money.

S2: Yes. Things regarding green cards.

CH: Is there any particular prayer that is made?

S2: You can make a prayer, but you can make a petition. Like in that book, there are many rituals.

CH: Mh. It's-

S2: How the rituals are done to ask for...

CH: And you, what are the prayers that-

S2: I think that the best prayers that can be made are the ones that born from the soul.

CH: Ah, ok.

S2: The other forms are words written by another man. So, it's like how you ask and what you ask that is conceived.

CH: Well said. Well said. Ok. And that has never failed you?

S2: No.

CH: Are there any particular candles that are placed?

S2: There it depends on the ritual. There are different things, but you can place any kind.

CH: And-what else was I going to ask...He possesses you when you are going to-

S2: A long time ago. Two or three times. It's not something that I'm going to tell you that-

CH: Occurs...

S2: Because it doesn't happen all the time. Because I also wouldn't lie.

CH: Ok. But, let me see, the day that we went to celebrate the birthday, he was present.

S2: Yes.

CH: Because I remember that you were-it was Carlos, but you-

S2: It was different, yes, because I had recently had an operation. I couldn't believe that. That recently being in surgery that I would be doing all that I was doing.

CH: Yes, yes.

S2: So, there is a proof that the spirit is very strong.

CH: I remember because I think that if one has recently been through the surgery that you went through at that time, they wouldn't be able to move at that moment-

S2: No.

CH: And you were very agile.

S2: No. Yes.

CH: But since it was another mental state.

S2: Yes. That's part of the spirit and that's why I sometimes tell you that the spirit makes one strong. It gives you the strength.

CH: Did you invoke him for that occasion-

S2: Yes.

CH: Or did he-

S2: One invokes him because it was the day of his celebration. He felt good, also.

CH: I remember that at the end of, when the party was over, it was evening, many of the people had left, but a few people were left. A few women and they started to dance. Why were they dancing?

S2: Because he likes that.

CH: Oh, he-

S2: He likes the prostitute. He likes the, I don't know, the dance, the worldly.

CH: Hm, ok.

S2: The earthly.

CH: Ok.

S2: A spirit that likes-

CH: Parties finish like that for him?

S2: In other forms. There are things, there are times that prostitutes dance for him, but regularly they do it naked.

CH: Oh, yes? Hmm. Ok. And why do they do that?

S2: To please him.

CH: So, only to please him? Oh, ok.

S2: To please him. To give thanks for what he has done for them.

CH: And what is the story of San Simon? How did he get to be a spirit so well-

S2: Well-known.

CH: Known and so loved by many people?

S2: Look, in reality I haven't exactly read the story well. There I'm a little-

CH: What?

S2: Short, but I don't know that much of his story.

CH: Ok.

S2: For me he is a new spirit that one can say that I came to adopt here.

CH: Ah, ok. How long have you known of San Simon?

S2: Look, to start working like that with him were I would ask him, a small amount of time. A small amount of time because I didn't previously accept him. I didn't accept the spirit as something benign because a spirit that does good and evil. And that is not right.

CH: And he does both.

S2: He does both things, but that perhaps because people invoke him to do evil or use him to cause harm. So, when I started to work with him I told, "Look, I'm not going to even ask you for evil things and I don't want you to cause harm, either. I will try give you the light that perhaps your spirit needs so that you can help me as the mortal that you were and as the mortal that I am," I told him. "Well, let's...as the spirit that you are, I can't reject you, either. So, I'm not being faithful to myself. That's what I work as," I told him. Well, as the spirit that he is.

CH: So, you made a deal?

S2: Yes.

CH: Ok. What else was I going-what else did I want to ask you concerning San Simon? Well, I guess that's everything. Maybe I would like to ask you concerning el Niño de Atocha.

S2: Del Niño de Atocha.

CH: Yes. Or to say, what would be your relationship with el Niño de Atocha?

S2: Look, it's a little, how can I tell you this? It's something that I am also not too-

CH: Firm in.

S2: Firm in. It's something that I don't really-I don't know how to tell you, but I just don't find any...

CH: So, you don't work often with him?

S2: I don't. No, because-these are things that like when for a santero he's the greatest thing.

CH: El Niño de Atocha.

S2: El Niño de Atocha.

CH: Yes, because sometimes I have seen that they place el Niño de Atocha with [Inaudible] and with San Simon. Do you use the three together or-

S2: No, because I can ask San Simon or I can ask Jesus who is the greatest of my spirits. Because it's the first thing that I do, invoke him, and I also ask him. As the spirit that he is I can ask, but you know, the whole world mentions that. No, no, it's not my custom.

CH: It's not your custom. Ok. Like for how many years would you say that you have been practicing prayers for San Simon? How many years?

S2: It hasn't been a very long time. I would say that it's not a very long time.

CH: Ok.

S2: Not a very long time. Perhaps it's been two or three years, more or less.

CH: Something like that.

S2: Not a very long time.

CH: Ok. So, you don't work with el Niño?

S2: No.

CH: Ok.

S2: I could ask all of them, but for me, I like working very much with la muerte (death).

CH: With la muerte? Ah. And what can you tell me about la muerte? How do you work with la muerte?

S2: There are many ways to work. People fear him. Many people fear working with la muerte, but I don't recognize it as la muerte. I call him by another name.

CH: Mh. Ok.

S2: Because I don't like saying la muerte, but...

CH: Ok.

S2: I like to call him by San Pascual Bailon or...

CH: Ok. San Pascual Bailon.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Is there any thing else that they call him like that?

S2: Yes. In Guatemala and in different areas they call him San Pascual. El Rey San Pascual (King St. Pascual).

CH: I think I've heard talk about him. I don't know too much about la muerte. How do you invoke la muerte?

S2: For that, there are prayers and well, you ask him, also.

CH: But, you make some of those prayers?

S2: No, I just ask him like that. The way that I can-

CH: The way-

S2: Aha. The way it just comes out because I don't know how to pray. But I like the way he feels my desire to-

CH: I see that you have three different colors.

S2: There are different.

CH: Red, white, and a yellow one.

S2: There are reds, yellows and there are different [ones] for different things.

CH: What is the red one for?

S2: The red is regularly used for love.

CH: For love. Works (trabajos) for love?

S2: Mh-h. For works of love.

CH: And the white one?

S2: For health. It can also be for love.

CH: Love can also be for love?

S2: Mh-h.

CH: What is the difference between the things of love in the red one and the white one?

S2: They are spiritual things.

CH: Oh, ok.

S2: Like white is purity.

CH: Ok. And green?

S2: More than anything, money.

CH: Ok. Money. And when the world is in the hand, is that a different property or-?

S2: Well, supposedly, we're governed by her, right?

CH: Mh-h.

S2: So, she's the mistress of the universe. The mistress of everything. They simply title it like that.

CH: I see that you've placed some small chains of-

S2: Of serpents?

CH: Green frogs. Aha. Green, and silver and reddish.

S2: Red and white.

CH: But they are good for-?

S2: No, just because. You know, for there to be happiness. For there to be harmony.

CH: Ok. And la muerte that is sitting, I see that it has spots inside of it.

S2: Those are prepared.

CH: Oh, ok.

S2: That's so food will always be abundant at home.

CH: Ok.

S2: It's an internal protection that it has.

CH: Ok. And the axe that it has in its hand?

S2: That is the scythe, the knife-

CH: The scythe.

S2: Aha, that one that is used for-

CH: Even if he had to.

S2: The scythe.

CH: Ok. And it's for?

S2: To defend or at the same time to be victorious enemies.

CH: Ok. And la muerte that is in black?

S2: That one can be used for many things. For works of love as well as to destroy someone.

CH: Mh, ok. Could you give me an example of an occasion in which you called la santísima muerte (the holy death) and she helped you in something?

S2: Oh, many things. Regularly, I use her for works of love.

CH: For works of love? Could you give me an example of one work of love?

S2: I just work with candles. I just light candles and ask her to-

CH: To do.

S2: To do.

CH: Ok. Ok. And I want to see. what else do you have here. Well, I've asked about los indios (the Indians). The Indians. Do you use the spirits of Indians?

S2: Use them indirectly like that, no. But for us, they are the oldest spirits and we respect them. Well, at least I respect them because for me, I know that I have a warring Indian, but it ends there. But the santero does invoke them often. They call them [Inaudible]. So, to defend, to war, to fight. I'm not accustomed to that, but I like it a lot.

CH: The Indian.

S2: The Indian.

CH: Do you have a spirit of some Indian to take care of you?

S2: Yes. There is, but my primary spirit guide is always predominant. She is always predominant.

CH: Her? The gypsy woman? Ok.

S2: It's always everyone in their order.

CH: Ok. How many spiritual guides would you say that you have?

S2: Oh, there are several.

CH: Since you are a spiritist (espirista), more than anything else.

S2: Yes, there are several and you can add many more. Many times they feel alone so they get close to prayer.

CH: Oh, I didn't ask you about the golden death (la muerte de oro). Is there any particular use?

S2: Like for money. For things-

MJ: Good morning.

S2: Come inside, Sarita.

Sarita: Oh.

S2: Come inside. Come inside.

Sarita: [Inaudible].

S2: Sit down.

Sarita: I didn't think that you were here. I was leaving.

S2: Sit down. No. Sit down. Right now I will...

CH: Do you have any questions that I may have forgotten? I asked about the statuettes and how he-and the spirits and how he might invoke them for healing purposes. St. Simon, the child (el Nino), death (la muerte).

MJ: [Inaudible].

CH: The Indian spirits. And the angels?

S2: Well, the angels, well, what can I tell you? For me they are like spirits, too.

CH: They guide you.

S2: Yes. Well, the catholic religion has inculcated that that is something.

CH: Then, I want to see. I wanted to make this question: What would be the foundation of your faith? Do you have different religious ideologies that guide you?

S2: Look, I base myself much on the catholic religion. I'm a believer because I don't think I'm catholic. I'm a believer because in reality there's a whole-I don't know. It has a mixture of all the religions. All of this, spiritism-difficult. But my preference is Catholicism, Christianity-I don't know what to call it.

CH: Yes, yes.

S2: Because we base ourselves, more than anything on the religion of Christ, the Christian religion, what He practiced when He was on earth. So, more than anything, we're...

Sarita: It's even in the Bible.

S2: Just that.

CH: Ok. Yes, I remember that we talked about Jesus and that He and the apostles had been some of the first-

S2: Baptists that were.

CH: Yes. Ok. So, I've asked about belief and spiritists.

MJ: Did you ask about the Atocha [Inaudible] ?

CH: Yes. He doesn't really work with him.

MJ: Wait a minute. We saw that woman at your party, Carlos.

S2: Mh-h.

CH: Sarita, yes.

MJ: Yeah.

S2: Yeah, she was there.

MJ: What's her name?

S2: Sarita. Sara.

Sarita: Sara.

MJ: Sara. Sarita. Oh.

CH: And she did his limpia.

MJ: Yeah.

CH: Oh, any person can give you a cleansing (limpia) or can only she do it?

S2: No. It has to be capable person.

CH: And she also works with the spiritual, which is why she's capable?

S2: Yes.

CH: She works spiritual works as well which is why she was allowed to give him his limpia. Ok.

MJ: Does she ever use herbs for anything?

S2: Oh, yeah.

MJ: Herbs.

S2: Yes. She can use herbs. Meat.

CH: Meat? Oh, really?

S2: [Inaudible] stuffed animals and-

CH: Carlos.

S2: That's a different ritual. Some of it.

MJ: Only for ritual?

S2: Mh-h. Yeah.

MJ: The herbs are not used for health?

S2: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Because most of the people that works as spirituals, we love herbs.

MJ: Yeah.

S2: Yeah, we love herbs. It's part of the earth. It's part of the...

MJ: Would she be willing talk to us sometime?

CH: Maybe we can ask her.

MJ: We'll ask her today if that's all right.

CH: [Inaudible].

S2: [Inaudible]. She's very weird. I don't think she'd...

CH: No? He thinks she may not be interested.

MJ: Well, we'll ask if that's ok.

S2: Mh-h. And if not on another occasion I will tell her.

CH: Ok. Ok. It's better that way, then.

MJ: Well, if we can-we'd like to-

S2: Go ahead.

MJ: Here and also take some still photographs.

S2: Sure.

MJ: Some of them involving you, but let me get to that pretty soon.

S2: That's no problem.

MJ: Ok. Let's see here. All right.

Interview Ends

Tape Continues